[*Note.*—**An asterisk (*) at the commencement of a speech indicates revision by the Member.**]

II.—MOTION UNDER RULE 40 OF THE ASSEMBLY RULES *RE* PREVALENCE OF PECULIAR EYE DISEASE IN BLATHUR, MALABAR DISTRICT.

MR. SPEAKER :—" Mr. T. C. Narayanan Nambiar."

9-50 a.m. SRI K. KUNHI MOHAMAD SHAFEE :—" Sir, I gave notice on 24th March 1955 under rule 40 of a motion to invite the attention of the Government to an urgent matter of public importance, namely . . ."

MR. SPEAKER :—" Is this the time to say all this? Whether I have admitted the motion or not can be known by the hon. Member by coming to my chamber. Why should he raise it now here? "

SRI T. C. NARAYANAN NAMBIAR :—" Sir, under rule 40 of the Assembly Rules, I beg to call attention of the Hon. the Minister for Health to a matter of urgent public importance, viz. :—

> '*The failure of the Government to take effective, preventive and curative medical measures to arrest the peculiar eye disease prevailing in Blathur in North Malabar by opening any eye relief camp, etc.*'

Sir, Blathur is a village in Irukkur firka which lies in the Western Ghat region. A quarter of a century ago, some fifteen or twenty fugitive cultivators were affected by a peculiar eye disease and some native physicians treated it. Sir, of late that disease has assumed an intense form and it is on the increase. Some 40 or 60 people have become completely blind and some 100 boys and girls and men and women have been affected by the disease now. I myself have made certain representations to the Government giving some useful suggestions. Of course, the Government have also deputed a medical officer and some enquiries are made even to-day. But I find no medical relief was given so far and in consequence fifty persons have become blind. No preventive measures have been taken and no curative measures either worth the name have been taken. The village is in an interior place and no hospital facilities are available. I would request the Government to start an eye relief camp at least there. I am also anxious to know what kind of disease it is, whether any diagnosis has been made and what action has been taken to prevent and arrest the spread of the disease. I belong to that constituency and I want to know what the Government have done in the matter."

* THE HON. SRI A. B. SHETTY :—" The epidemic prevalence of a peculiar eye disease in Blathur was first brought to notice about the third week of April 1954.

" Immediately, the District Health Officer, North Malabar, and the Regional Nutrition Health Officer of Madurai were directed to proceed to the spot for necessary investigation. They visited the area in April itself and carried out investigations. They also conducted a rapid Diet and Nutrition Survey in the area. It was found that the diet of the Hindu families contributed about 2,088 calories

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per head per day and that of the supposed unaffected Muslim families about 1,820 calories per head per day. The Nutrition Survey showed no gross evidence of mal-nutrition. The Director of Medical Services, Madras, was then addressed to depute an Eye Specialist to the spot for further specific lines of investigation and treatment. Accordingly, the Assistant District Medical Officer, Kozhikode, and the Honorary Ophthalmic Specialist at Tellicherry visited Blathur on 3rd June 1954 and reported that the prevailing eye diseases were in most cases Trachoma (Granular Conjunctivitis) of various stages and that the others were ordinary conjunctivitis. The District Health Officer, North Malabar, had in the meanwhile visited the place a second time in May 1954 and instituted necessary immediate remedial measures. In July, the Nutrition Health Officer at Madras was deputed to carry out further investigations to confirm the diagnosis and to undertake specific lines of treatment, in consultation with the Superintendent of the Ophthalmic Hospital at Madras. He visited the place in July with necessary quantities of Terramycin Ophthalmic ointment for treatment, and food supplements like milk powder, shark-liver oil, vitamin tablets, etc. He undertook a close study of all relevant factors concerned in the causation of the disease and also outlined a scheme of control measures. Accordingly, he immediately organised a treatment centre in the village itself—a temporary clinic open all day to suit the convenience of the patients as also the requirements of the special treatment proposed. A house-to-house census was taken by him to note the incidence of eye affections in each family and actually exhorted the sufferers to attend the clinic 3 to 4 times a day, as best for the particular anti-biotic treatment instituted. Smears from scrapings of the eyelids of over 30 cases were taken for confirming the diagnosis at Madras by the Ophthalmic Specialist. It was declared by the Superintendent of the Ophthalmic Hospital, Egmore, Madras, that the cases were probably of varied ætiology, some of old trachoma, with super added acute catarrhal conjunctivitis. The All-day clinic started in July 1954 has been continuing all these eight months without interruption under a Health Inspector specially diverted from the epidemic reserve and trained for the purpose. He is stationed in the village itself. In addition to the specific treatment outlined above, with Terramycin Aureomycin, the Health Inspector has also been distributing food supplements like skimmed milk powder, shark liver oil, vitamin tablets, etc., through the local school. The Nutrition Officer, Madras, has again visited the place in November 1954 and inspected the progress of measures undertaken in the area. Up to week ending 26th March 1955, about 447 different eye cases have been treated in the temporary clinic. Over Rs. 500 worth of Terramycin Aureomycin has been purchased for use at Blathur and ample stocks of food supplements have also been made available there. Of the 447 cases treated, 405 have attained clinical cure, according to the latest reports. There are, however, over 30 to 40 chronic sufferers. For them, the Director of Medical Services,

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Madras, has arranged necessary assistance of surgical treatment at Tellicherry, offering even the required free transport. The village is thus being kept under the closest supervision possible with one Health Inspector always available at the spot, supervisory officers inspecting the place quite frequently, and food supplements freely offered to all in need. The local people have also been privately and publicly proclaiming their gratitude for the assistance offered and the relief they are enjoying. Thus, it may be seen that all that is possible has been done and this programme of relief on foot will be pursued as long as necessary. However, in the case of a progressive disease like trachoma, the few chronic sufferers of long duration, even of 30 to 40 years in certain of the cases, the damage done to the eyes by their own long neglect, is really irrepairable, and nothing spectacular can be done in these cases by human efforts. Attempts to help early cases against relapse and to relieve their suffering by medical or surgical treatment, are under way.''

III.—GOVERNMENT MOTIONS *RE*

(1) RECOMMENDATION OF THE COUNCIL TO NOMINATE FIVE MEMBERS TO BE ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

10 a.m. THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" Sir, I move—

' *That this House recommends to the Legislative Council that they do nominate five members from the Council to associate with the Public Accounts Committee of this House for every financial year and communicate to this House the names of the members so nominated.*'

In moving this resolution I want to say a word of explanation. It is not the intention that those members coming from the Council will be given the privilege of voting along with the members of this Assembly forming the Public Accounts Committee. They will be only associated with the work of the Committee and their experience and their talents will be available to the Committee in presenting its report. It is not the intention that they should be given the power of voting in the Committee. They will be merely associates and their suggestions would be taken into consideration by the members of the Public Accounts Committee to reach a decision. That is all.''

MR. SPEAKER :—" Motion moved—

' That this House recommends to the Legislative Council that they do nominate five members from the Council to associate with the Public Accounts Committee of this House for every financial year and communicate to this House the names of the members so nominated.' "

* SRI S. SWAYAMPRAKASAM :—" On a point of order, Sir. I do not know under what rule the Hon. Leader of the House moved this resolution. That is one point. There is no rule in our Rules of Procedure permitting the moving of such a resolution.